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Reports of the Joint Inspection Unit

Summary

In 2002, UNDP contributed to the preparation of several reports or pre-reports of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU). These contributions were provided either through direct inputs to the JIU or through inputs and comments via the Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) in the context of the reform of inter-agency coordination mechanisms initiated by the Secretary-General. The present report provides a synopsis of each JIU report followed by selected recommendations of interest to UNDP from each report and UNDP comments thereon.

Elements of a decision

The Executive Board may wish to take note of the present report, particularly those aspects of the JIU reports that have particular relevance to the work of UNDP.

Individual reports

A. Involvement in civil society organizations other than non-governmental organizations and the private sector in technical cooperation activities: experiences and prospects of the United Nations system (JIU/REP/2002/1)

Scope

1. The objectives of the report are to examine the profile of civil society and analyse how the increased involvement and cooperation of its organizations in economic and social development programmes of selected United Nations organizations can be better structured and expanded.

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Recommendations of interest to UNDP

2. The key recommendations are: (a) civil society organization (CSO) should be involved in technical cooperation activities during all stages of programme planning, which includes design, sustainability, implementation/execution, monitoring and evaluation as well as follow-up; (b) accountability and reporting procedures must be taken into account in the partnership between the United Nations system organizations and CSOs; and (c) the existing mechanism at the country level has to be revised and amplified, shifting from limited and sporadic consultations to involvement of CSOs during the planning and execution process of technical cooperation activities in synergy with governments.

Comments by UNDP

3. UNDP agrees that CSOs should be involved in technical cooperation activities on the understanding that they satisfy selection criteria along with the approval and support of host governments. UNDP has guidelines in place for accountability and reporting procedures when partnering with CSOs. As part of the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) mechanism, UNDP has helped to develop new Integrated Guidelines in the common country assessment (CCA) and United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), which specifically provide for the engagement of civil society organizations as key partners of the programming process.

B. The results approach in the United Nations: implementing the United Nations Millennium Declaration (JIU/REP/2002/2)

Scope

4. The report comprises two parts: the first part deals with the experience of results-based budgeting and planning and their shortcomings, and explains why and how they can be improved and reconsidered. The second part describes the instruments and the new process, which could enable the United Nations system to adopt a meaningful realistic results approach and provide Member States with other important tools to monitor progress towards the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Recommendations of interest to UNDP

5. The key recommendations are: (a) the concept of "results" should be classified. A distinction should be made between results of programme activities of the United Nations proper, i.e., accomplishments used in the programme budget context, and results at the country and world level used in the context of major United Nations conferences and the Millennium Declaration; (b) for the medium term, at the country level the excessive number of documents and reports produced describing the situation of the country should be replaced, after consultation within the CEB, by a single document, to be called the common country review report (CCRR). This CCRR should replace, in the future, to the extent possible, reports made by

individual organizations in order to reduce transaction costs and avoid duplication. A strategic review debate should be held at the country level every five years in order to reach an agreement on the strategy to be applied.

Comments by UNDP

6. UNDP has been working with UNDG Executive Committee member organizations on harmonization and simplification of concepts, terminology, tools and procedures, following the decisions of the General Assembly on the triennial comprehensive policy review (TCPR) of operational activities for development 2001. UNDP does not claim that outcomes are primarily results obtained by the programme activities of the United Nations proper. Nor does the organization find any conceptual difficulty in linking them to broader national and global goals, such as the MDGs. The strategic results framework (SRF) tries to do just this. UNDP has reservations about the proposal for new instruments, such as CCRR, for a number of reasons, not least of all that this pre-empts the results of the ongoing harmonization and simplification process in the UNDG; neglects the changes introduced by United Nations reforms; and is much too centralized and top-down for operational organizations such as the funds and programmes. UNDP reservations have been expressed in the comments of the CEB on this report, and are shared at the United Nations system level.

C. Support costs related to extrabudgetary activities in organizations of the United Nations system (JIU/REP/2002/3)

Scope

7. The objectives of this report are to examine the establishment and application of extrabudgetary support-cost policies and cost-measurement methodologies from a policy perspective rather than a technical perspective.

Recommendations of interest to UNDP

8. The key recommendations are: (a) executive heads of the organizations, which have not yet done so, should explore the possibility of including, as direct and internal project or programme costs, identifiable elements presently covered by percentage-based support-cost charges; (b) the Executive Board of UNDP should review the practice of incorporating indirect support costs for United Nations system organizations as part of the cost of substantive UNDP project inputs and expenditures.

Comments by UNDP

9. In the context of current UNDP review of its cost-recovery policy, the organization is further addressing this subject. Already, as mentioned in this JIU report, the integration of administrative and operational services (AOS) associated with the delivery of programme inputs is now an integral part of programme costs. The Executive Board of UNDP/UNFPA adopted this approach at its third regular

session 1998 in decision 98/19 on successor programming arrangements, which took effect in 2001.

D. Extension of water-related technical cooperation projects to end-beneficiaries: bridging the gap between the normative and the operational in the United Nations system (case studies in two African countries) (JIU/REP/2002/4)

Scope

10. The objective of the report is to identify problems encountered by and opportunities available to the United Nations system in the field of water-related technical cooperation projects, including ways of strengthening collaboration among its organizations, with a view to maximizing the benefits to the end-beneficiaries.

Comments by UNDP

11. As all the recommendations in this report are addressed to the General Assembly or the CEB secretariat, UNDP will work with the CEB secretariat to follow up on the recommendations as they apply to UNDP.

E. Reform of the administration of justice in the United Nations system: options for higher recourse instances (JIU/REP/2002/5)

Scope

12. The objectives of the report are to consider, in the context of the reform of the administration of justice in the United Nations system, the possibility of establishing a higher instance with respect to the binding decisions of the two main international administrative jurisdictions, namely, the International Labour Organization Administrative Tribunal (ILOAT) and the United Nations Administrative Tribunal (UNAT), in consultation with the organizations of the United Nations system, and bearing in mind the national legal systems of Member States.

Comments by UNDP

13. UNDP participated with the United Nations Office of Legal Affairs in reviewing this document. As UNDP is a programme of the Untied Nations, it follows the rules and procedures of the competent legislative organs of the United Nations in the administration of justice.

F. United Nations System revenue-producing activities (JIU/REP/2002/6)

Scope

14. The objective of the report is to review United Nations system policies and practices relating to revenue-producing activities with a view to establishing a coherent policy framework for these activities and improving their management efficiency and effectiveness.

Comments by UNDP

15. UNDP has taken note of the various revenue-producing activities in this report. UNDP will work with the CEB secretariat to follow up on the recommendations as they apply to UNDP.

G. Management audit review of outsourcing in the United Nations and United Nations funds and programmes (JIU/REP/2002/7)

Scope

16. The objective of the report is to establish the extent to which the outsourcing practices in 1999 and 2000 by the United Nations Secretariat and the United Nations funds and programmes were consistent with the policy directives set forth in General Assembly resolution 55/232 of 23 December 2000.

Recommendations of interest to UNDP

17. The key recommendations are: (a) the Inter-Agency Procurement Working Group (IAPWG) should aim, inter alia, through shared databases, to standardize and generalize the application of due diligence procedures within the United Nations system, using relevant provisions of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) supply manual as a model; (b) programme managers should understand the "lowest acceptable bid" rule in the United Nations procurement manual to cover also the "best value for money" principle, and the World Food Programme (WFP) might wish to share with other organizations in IAPWG the relevant provisions of its non-food procurement manual on the "best value" award for the competitive Request for Proposal (RFP) process, and IAPWG should seek agreement on standard contract provisions emphasizing cost-effectiveness and efficiency in outsourced operations, depending on the nature of the service or activity being outsourced, especially for high-value contracts, and the said provisions should specify as clearly as possible the various measures against which the contractor's performances could be measured; (c) IAPWG should consider disseminating among its members the evolving experience of the United Nations Procurement Division in the use of its new formats for monitoring, evaluating and certifying supplier performance under outsourced contracts.

Comments by UNDP

18. UNDP, through the Inter-Agency Procurement Services Office (IAPSO), in its capacity as secretariat of the IAPWG, is including these three recommendations in the agenda of the IAPWG meeting scheduled for May 2003.

H. Review of management and administration in the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations (JIU/REP/2002/8)

Scope

19. The objective of this report is to identify areas for improvement in the administrative and management practices of the FAO in the light of past, current and planned reform in the organization.

Comments by UNDP

20. UNDP has reviewed the document and has taken note of the recommendations.

I. Managing information in the United Nations system organizations: management information systems (JIU/REP/2002/9)

Scope

21. The objectives of this report are to review the experiences with management information systems in United Nations system organizations and draw lessons therefrom, and to provide a set of guidelines aimed at strengthening information management and improving design and implementation of management information systems as effective tools for better management in United Nations system organizations.

Recommendation of interest to UNDP

22. The main recommendation is to take the following steps – as far as they have not yet done so – prior to introducing and/or developing a new management information system: (a) streamline existing work processes, procedures and practices in such a way as to support results-based management, and identify functional requirements to meet their critical objectives on the basis of streamlined work processes/procedures/practices, with due consideration of a possible outsourcing of support functions such as payroll, accounting etc.; (b) establish a plan for integrating various management systems (such as financial and human resources management systems), with a view to introducing/developing and integrating organization-wide management information system such as the Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP); (c) carry out an in-depth review of functionality that ERP applications can provide, and make a cost-benefit analysis of various options available to each organization (such as developing in-house, sharing services with other United Nations organizations, buying a commercial package, including the

possibility of changing procedures to adapt to the best industry practices rather than "customizing" commercial products to adapt to the requirements of the organizations), bearing in mind the need, to the extent possible, for interagency cooperation and coordination; (d) report, for review and appropriate action, on the measures taken on the above, and, on a regular basis, on the progress made in management information system project implementation.

Comments

23. UNDP participated extensively with the JIU while they prepared this report. The recommendation above reflects the steps taken by UNDP in selecting and implementing the ERP, which is scheduled for release in January 2004.

J. Evaluation of United Nations system response in East Timor: coordination and effectiveness (JIU/REP/2002/10)

Scope

24. The objective of the report is to evaluate the United Nations system response in East Timor, including arrangements, processes and mechanisms applied, in order to highlight lessons from the experience with a view to improving coordination among United Nations organizations and maximizing the impact and effectiveness of their operations in emergency and post-conflict situations.

Recommendations of interest to UNDP

25. The key recommendations are: (a) the legislative organs of participating organizations may wish to encourage the executive heads of their respective organizations to make more use of the Consolidated Appeal Process (CAP) as a planning and programming tool, and to enhance their organizations capacities to achieve this in the framework of the ongoing efforts within the Inter-Agency Standing Committee to strengthen CAP as a tool for strategic planning and coordination; (b) the legislative organs of those participating organizations, which have not yet done so, may wish to support the establishment of an emergency revolving fund in their respective organizations.

Comments by UNDP

26. This is a very comprehensive report and accurately reflects the situation as it was in East Timor. The lessons learned by UNDP in this country shows that the organization needs to play a much clearer role in the recovery phase, and calls for the development of a UNDP-World Bank nexus, which UNDP is approaching with the low income countries under stress (LICUS) initiative.

K. Implementation of multilingualism in the United Nations system (JIU/REP/2002/11)

Scope

27. The objective of the report is to assist legislative bodies and secretariats in their efforts to address the challenges of maintaining and improving the multilingual content of services required by the universal character of United Nations system organizations.

Recommendations of interest to UNDP

28. The key recommendations are: (a) as part of their reporting on the use of languages, executive heads should submit to their governing bodies information on the status of languages used for work within the secretariat and, in that connection, they should indicate (1) the requirements for establishing on enabling environment to foster the strict application of rules concerning the use of mandated working languages, including the availability of databases and research tools, (2) the implications of using or not being proficient in a de facto working language in terms of recruitment policies and career development, (3) the extent to which other languages are used by staff from all duty stations to perform their official functions, and incentives which may be provided to that effect; (b) executive heads should encourage or continue to encourage their staff and particularly their senior staff to foster a cultural change within secretariats by making fuller use of their linguistic capabilities, which should be translated into more visible indicators in the workplace.

Comments by UNDP

29. UNDP adheres fully to the recommendations of the report as indicated at the time that the questionnaire was circulated by the JIU to prepare their data and recommendations. Multilingualism is always encouraged by UNDP and is used in its web sites and administrative circulars at least in the organization's working languages – English, French and Spanish – and is considered at the time of recruitment of staff.